

Ecobook

Objective

Students can demonstrate how various organisms fit into an ecosystem and define terms such as producer, consumer, niche, and habitat.

Directions

This is an activity that integrates several aspects of ecology into a single package. By putting ecology into a familiar context (Facebook™), students can draw parallels between social networking and the interdependence of life.

Let's go over what each part of the worksheet is used for:

The rectangle in the upper left is the organism's "photo". Students are to draw these themselves, and you may want to encourage them to be creative/have fun with it.

The *Networks* section on Facebook is used to show what social networks the user belongs to. They may be geographic (e.g., New York City) or a school (UC Davis). On Ecobook, students use this section to write descriptors for their chosen organism. For instance, The Lion might belong to the Savannah, Secondary Consumers, Felines, and Carnivores networks.

Ecobook uses a fairly liberal interpretation of *Friends*. These are organisms that share a symbiotic relationship with the organism being profiled; therefore, parasites, prey, and predators should ideally be included as well. I included space for 8 friends, so students may need to prioritize if they can think up more than that. Also, I originally wanted to included space for a picture of each friend (like the photo box). Although that's how the section is formatted on Facebook, I couldn't find room to do that on the page. If students can squeeze in tiny drawings of each friend, it may be a fun addition to this assignment.

Alternatively, you may choose students to work with each other to complete the *Friends* section. Just like both friends on Facebook must confirm they know each other, you may also choose to have students seek out their classmates before mutually adding each other's organism to their friends list.

At the top of the right column is the *Name* box. This is simply the organism being profiled.

Below that is the organism's *Status*. Facebook allows users to update their status so friends can see what they're up to. For example, someone might update their status to say "John is studying for his Genetics midterm." This part of the worksheet isn't terribly important, but you may want to encourage students to be creative here as well; "What's something your organism might say about itself?"

Next is the *Info* section. On Facebook, this section contains — surprise! — information about the user. Some fields used on the site include birthday, relationship status, and hometown. With all the information available on a given organism, I prioritized and decided that habitat and niche were the most important two pieces of information not mentioned elsewhere.

Finally is the *Wall*. This section is where friends leave public comments directed toward each other. I left these lines blank to give teachers and students some flexibility. Students with symbiotic organisms should ask each other to "write on their wall." Again, it might be fun to allow pictures here as well, but if not the Wall section will look something like:

Zebra's Wall

Lion: Hey Zebra, what are you up to tomorrow? I'm hungr—I mean, there's a party on the savannah tomorrow! I hope you can make it!

Grass: Oh, you think you can just walk all over me, huh?

Oxpecker: Thank you SO much for having me over! You're an excellent host!

I left some space at the bottom of the right column for student names, but you can use that for additional space if needed, and have students write their names on the back.

Figuring out which organisms interact with each other is the crux of this activity. Either you'll have a list of organisms you've prepared yourself, or you'll have students determine themselves which organism they will feature in their Ecobook page. This can be an individual or group activity, but it works better in small groups.

Estimated Time

20 to 30 minutes

If you have any comments or suggestions for this activity, I'd love to hear them. Email me at magistrallearning@gmail.com!

-Vince Favilla